

**Opening Statement of Senator Charles Grassley**  
**Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing**  
**"Betrayal: Quality of Care in California Nursing Homes"**  
**Day #2, July 28, 1998**

Good morning and welcome to Day 2 of our hearing entitled "Betrayal: The Quality of Care in California Nursing Homes." Yesterday we devoted the day to listening to the horrifying and painful stories of several victims regarding their experiences in California nursing homes. We also heard from several insiders within the California nursing home community. These insiders described to us what they had personally seen, heard and done while working in California nursing homes.

After listening to yesterday's witnesses, some may believe that these witnesses were simply describing isolated incidents that happened over the years in California nursing homes. After all, we all know mistakes happen. Nothing could be further from the truth. Today we are not describing an isolated problem or two. We are not speaking about a nursing home resident or two. We are not describing a mistake or two. We are talking about a systemic problem in California nursing homes where more than 140,000 of our most vulnerable and defenseless citizens spend what are very often their last days.

Today's hearing will be divided into three panels. First, we will hear an overview of the infrastructure that was created by the federal government to ensure that nursing home residents receive adequate care. Immediately thereafter, we will hear from the General Accounting Office. The GAO will tell us about their findings. In my opinion, these findings are the equivalent of a national scandal.

We will also hear from a nationally-renowned researcher in the field of long term care. She has provided many, many recommendations to the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) over the years. HCFA is the agency that pays nursing homes with our Medicare dollars. HCFA is also ultimately responsible for ensuring that nursing home residents receive adequate care. Finally, we will hear from HCFA and from industry representatives.

In addition, we extended an invitation to the State of California to appear before us today. We extended this invitation because the Committee thought it was important to provide California with an opportunity to respond to both the GAO findings and yesterday's witnesses. We were also hopeful that the State would set forth a plan to address the GAO's findings. Unfortunately, the State of California declined our invitation.